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ABSTRACT

This report examined the relation between elementary principals' attitudes and administrative patterns of corporal punishment in Arizona during the 1988-89 school year. An attempt was made to identify differences by such variables as gender of administrator-respondent and child and ethnicity of respondent and child. The study randomly selected 62 principals, who were sent a researcher-designed and researcher-validated questionnaire. Respondents also recorded incidence and frequency of paddlings administered to students, differentiated by male/female students, by minority/nonminority students, and by the person administering the punishment (principal or other administrator). Summary descriptive statistics (percentages and frequencies) were used to analyze data. These analyses revealed significant differences between select groups' attitudes toward corporal punishment. A greater percentage of male principals administered paddlings; however, female principals paddled twice as frequently as male principals. Boys received the most paddlings, and nonminorities received more paddling than minorities. Male principals agreed more than female principals with the idea of corporal punishment. Males believe that boys deserve it more than girls and that minorities deserve it more than nonminorities. This study has clear policy implications for related child abuse legislation and for recent efforts by the Arizona PTA and the state legislature to abolish or reconsider the use of corporal punishment in schools. Appendices of data tables are included. (11 references) (MLH)

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ATTITUDES & PRACTICES OF PUBLIC SCHOOL ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS TOWARD CORPORAL PUNISHMENT IN ARIZONA

A Submission for Research Presentation or Symposium Format:

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Subject Descriptors:

1. Corporal punishment
2. Discipline practices
3. Attitudes of elementary principals

Program Summary:

A survey on attitudes and administration of corporal punishment by elementary principals revealed differences in paddlings received by gender and ethnicity of student; attitudes varied by gender of principal respondent.

Participation:

Packard & Dereshiwsky presented at the past two annual AERO conferences (Career Ladder model of system readiness for change & accountability at 1988 & 1989 meetings; also presented an integrative model for teaching research design & statistics at 1989 AERO symposium).

ABSTRACT

ATTITUDES & PRACTICES OF PUBLIC SCHOOL

ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS TOWARD CORPORAL PUNISHMENT IN ARIZONA

This study was undertaken to determine the relation between attitudes and administration patterns of corporal punishment by elementary school principals in Arizona during the 1988 - 1989 school year. Specifically, the researcher sought to identify differences by such variables as gender of administrator-respondent; ethnicity (minority status) of respondent; gender of child; and ethnicity (minority status) of child.

The population for this study consisted of elementary principals from those Arizona schools with any combination of grade levels from kindergarten through sixth grade. Sixty-two (62) principals were selected at random to participate in the study.

Data on attitudes and administration of corporal punishment were collected and analyzed in two forms. A researcher-designed and validated questionnaire consisted of three sections. The first section collected demographic information, such as the gender and ethnicity of the subjects; their total years of experience as principal; the size of the community in which the school was located; the total number of students in the school; and their gender and ethnicity. The second section of this survey consisted of questions on corporal punishment practices currently in force in the school (e.g., whether allowed in district and/or school; who is allowed to administer it; and whether or not it has been administered during the 1988 - 1989 school year). The third section of this instrument consisted of a number of four-point Likert-scaled items (scaled from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree") concerning respondents' attitudes toward specific aspects of corporal punishment (e.g., whether it should be allowed in Arizona; whether boys deserve it more than girls; and whether minority students deserve it more than non-minority students).

The second means of data collection was a researcher-designed ledger on which subjects were asked to record the incidence and frequency of paddlings administered to students. Frequency of paddlings was recorded separately for male & female students;

for minority & non-minority students; and by the person administering the punishment (principal vs. other administrator).

Information from the survey and ledger was presented in the form of summary descriptive statistics (e.g., percentages and frequencies). Chi squares were used to identify significant associations between extent of agreement/disagreement on the attitudinal items and demographic factors of the respondents and the students, as well as other mitigating background factors, such as the size of the community in which the school was located. Sources of difference in attitudes toward corporal punishment were also analyzed globally (by creating a summated attitude score for each respondent) and also on a per-item basis by application of analysis of variance and the nonparametric rank-order tests Kruskal-Wallis and Mann-Whitney U, respectively.

These analyses revealed significant differences between select groups' attitudes toward corporal punishment. A greater percentage of male principals administered paddlings; however, female principals paddled twice as frequently as male principals. Boys accounted for the greatest percentage of those receiving paddlings, with non-minorities receiving more paddlings than minorities. Furthermore, there is a significant difference between male & female principals with respect to allowing corporal punishment in Arizona. Males agreed more than females with the idea of permitting it. Males also believe that boys deserve it more than girls, and that minorities deserve it more than non-minorities. Principals from those schools not allowing corporal punishment tended to disagree that minority students receive more corporal punishment.

This study has clear implications for the recent interest in state policy-making concerning corporal punishment in the schools. According to the National Committee for the Prevention of Child Abuse, most of the 19 states which currently prohibit corporal punishment have enacted related legislation since January 1989. In August of 1989, the Arizona Parent Teachers Association (PTA) ratified a national PTA resolution to abolish corporal punishment in the nation's schools. The November 1989 agenda of the Arizona State Legislature included formulating upcoming law as to the allowance of continued corporal punishment in the state. Given the accountability of law-makers to the interests of their public, research which identifies profiles and sources of differences in both attitudes and patterns of administration would provide valuable information upon which to make such critical decisions for discipline practices in the elementary grades.

ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES OF PUBLIC SCHOOL
ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS TOWARD
CORPORAL PUNISHMENT IN THE
STATE OF ARIZONA

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FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 1990

This study was concerned with reporting the attitudes and administration of corporal punishment by elementary principals in Arizona during the 1988-1989 school year.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

There appear to be no applied empirically-based studies that support the use of corporal punishment (Bongiovanni 1979). Published reviews have indicated that the effects of corporal punishment in applied settings are still largely unknown (Gardner 1969; Walters and Grusec 1977). Despite the absence of research support, corporal punishment continues to be used in public schools (Hyman 1976; Hyman, McDowell and Raines 1977; National Coalition of Advocates for Students 1983). As Jones and Tanner (1981) point out, classroom discipline, as an area of research and theoretical study, has been a largely unclaimed legacy for scholars in education. "Not only is little known about the effects of corporal punishment, but we are also lacking equally in descriptive information regarding its use in public schools" (Rose 1984).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The purpose of this study is to analyze administrative attitudes and practices regarding the application of specific aspects of corporal punishment in the selected public elementary schools in Arizona. The following research questions will be explored.

SUB-PROBLEMS

1. What are administrative attitudes toward corporal punishment relative to the gender of the student?
2. What are administrative attitudes toward corporal punishment relative to the ethnicity of the student?
3. What are administrative practices regarding who receives corporal punishment (punished/frequency), relative to the gender of the student?
4. What are administrative practices regarding frequency of corporal punishment relative to the ethnicity of the student?
5. What are the interactions between gender and ethnic categories of the students in the use of corporal punishment?
6. What is the interaction between school size, i.e., enrollment, and the administration of corporal punishment?
7. What are administrative attitudes toward corporal punishment relative to the gender of the administrator?
8. What are administrative practices regarding frequency of corporal punishment relative to the gender of the administrator?

POPULATION

The population for this study consisted of all Arizona public elementary school principals whose scope of administration encompassed any combinations of grades kindergarten through sixth grade. A random sample of these principals yielded 96 principals, or 20 percent of 480 principals.

DATA COLLECTION

Each of the principals (96) identified through random sampling was mailed a pre-letter soliciting their involvement. Also included in the letter was a stamped postcard for them to return indicating their interest or lack of interest in participating in the survey. Seventy eight principals (16% of 480) agreed to participate in the study. There were, however, only 62 principals who elected to participate, which is 79 percent of the original 78 principals or 13 percent of the population of 480.

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

The data for this study were obtained by a survey instrument developed by the author. The survey instrument established face validity and content validity through the assistance of 18 educators.

The first part of the survey requested specific demographic information including the sex of the respondent, the community size, number of students enrolled, approximate

number of males, approximate number of females and the approximate number of minority students.

The second portion of the survey instrument contained four specific questions relating to corporal punishment rules and regulations and practices within the school and the district. The latter part of this section was composed of five questions dealing with administrators' attitudes regarding corporal punishment. This information was acquired using a four-point Likert scale which included the following categories: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, or Strongly Disagree.

A "Record Ledger," designed by the author, was provided to each participating principal upon which they were asked to mark a tally each time corporal punishment was administered at their school. Because state law allows for the administration of corporal punishment by certified personnel, the ledger contained eight sections for possible markings. The sections were the following for a Principal and other certified personnel: Male/Female; and Minority/Non-minority. The principals were asked to return the ledger with the survey instrument.

DATA ANALYSIS

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

All the information gathered through the survey instrument and "Record Ledger" was stated in terms of percentages and frequencies. A valid percent was provided for all categories, i.e., the actual number of responses to a given item excluding the missing responses. Another formula for determining the response ratio included using the number of responses to a given item divided by the number of people in the sample.

The most frequently answered item of each question was identified, as was the most frequently marked box of the "Record Ledger."

INFERENTIAL STATISTICS

All the information gathered was analyzed with a Chi Square nonparametric test of significance. The Likert scale is an ordinal level of measurement, while the remainder of data observations are grouped into several discrete, mutually exclusive categories wherein one counts the frequency of occurrence in each category (nominal). Significance was set at the .05 alpha level.

When appropriate, information gathered was also analyzed with a Mann-Whitney U, Kruskal-Wallis 1-Way Anova, Analysis of Variance and Chronbach's Alpha. The level of significance was also set at the .05 alpha level.

SUMMARY OF CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

A total of 226 boys received corporal punishment. Forty-two percent of these subjects were minorities, while 58 percent were non-minorities. Seventy-six percent of the paddlings were administered by principals, and 24 percent were administered by others. Fourteen girls received corporal punishment. Seventy-one percent of these females were minorities, while 29 percent were non-minorities. Seventy-one percent of the paddlings were administered by principals, while 29 percent were administered by others. Of these 240 paddlings recorded, 94 percent were administered to boys and six percent to girls. Of the same 240 paddlings, 44 percent were administered to minorities.

FEMALE PRINCIPALS WHO ADMINISTERED CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

There were four respondents, which is 23.5 percent of the total number of principals administering corporal punishment and 13 percent of the total number of females in the study. They averaged five years of experience. Their 69 paddlings represent 38 percent of the total paddlings administered by principals. Ninety-three percent of their paddlings were administered to boys.

MALE PRINCIPALS WHO ADMINISTERED CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

Thirteen subjects were in this category, which is 76.5 percent of the total number of principals administering corporal punishment and 42 percent of the total number of males in the study.

They averaged 11 years of experience. Their 113 paddlings represent 62 percent of the total paddlings administered by principals. Ninety-six percent of their paddlings were administered to boys.

COMPARISON OF MALE/FEMALE PRINCIPALS ADMINISTERING CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

The females comprised one-fourth of the respondents, as compared to the three-fourths male. However, females accounted for 38 percent of the paddlings, as compared to 62 percent of the males. The females averaged five years of experience, while the males averaged 11 years; and females averaged 17.25 paddlings, while the males averaged 7.5.

Both male (96 percent) and female (93 percent) paddled a disproportionately high number of boys versus girls. Fifty-nine percent of those paddled by the females were minority students, while 43 percent of those paddled by males were minority students. Of the female principals who paddled, 75 percent were Anglo. Of the male principals paddling for whom ethnicity was available, all were Anglo.

A greater percentage of male principals administered paddlings, which also accounted for a greater percentage of total paddlings administered. On average, female principals paddled twice as frequently as male principals. Boys accounted for the greatest percentage of those receiving paddlings, with non-minorities receiving more paddlings than minorities.

There was no significant difference in the proportional administration of corporal punishment when compared by gender on an independent - samples t-test, or by experience when compared on an ANOVA. (Appendix A and C)

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

A review of the findings reveals that there were a number of statements that yielded significant differences among respondents.

When corporal punishment is administered at a school, 77 percent of the principals agreed that minorities received it more than non-minorities.

When compared to subjects from schools that indeed administered corporal punishment in 1988-1989, the principals were about evenly split.

When corporal punishment was not allowed at a school, 49 percent of the principals agreed that minorities received more corporal punishment than non-minorities, as compared with 76 percent of principals agreeing from schools that did not administer corporal punishment in 1988-1989. There were 75 percent of the male principals who agreed that corporal punishment should be permitted in elementary schools, as compared with only 25 percent of the females. By a three to one ratio, the females disagreed with allowing corporal punishment in elementary schools. When corporal punishment is allowed in a district, 70 percent of the principals agreed with permitting it in elementary schools as compared with 17 percent agreeing from districts not allowing corporal punishment. Therefore, when comparing the disagreement of the same two groups, a respondent will disagree with permitting corporal punishment two and one-half times more than if from a district not allowing it.

The summated scores on the Likert statements also yielded significant differences in some areas. (Appendix B) Women principals tended to disagree more strongly than the men when comparing their summated attitudes. When corporal punishment was allowed in the district, those principals agreed more with the statements than those from districts not allowing corporal punishment.

When corporal punishment was administered at a subject's school, his/her attitude was more in agreement with the Likert statements than those from schools that did not administer corporal punishment. They generally were in disagreement. If corporal punishment was administered during 1988-1989, subjects tended to be closer to agreeing with the Likert statements, as compared with principals from schools that did not administer corporal punishment who squarely disagreed.

A ranking of the scores reveals that there is a significant difference between males and females with regard to whether boys deserve more corporal punishment, whether minorities deserve more corporal punishment, and whether corporal punishment should be allowed in elementary schools. Females disagreed.

With regard to allowing corporal punishment at a school, there was significant difference in subjects' response to boys receiving corporal punishment more than girls. If corporal punishment was allowed in 1988-1989, there was a significant difference in subjects' attitude

with respect to allowing it in elementary schools in general.

When the community sizes were recoded to less than 50,000 and greater than 50,000, there were significant differences noted on all Likert statements except for the question allowing corporal punishment in elementary schools.

Another important finding is that female principals tended to be in greater disagreement with the Likert statements than male principals.

A review of communities from where principals administering corporal punishment came reveals the following: Two females came from communities of 10,000-50,000, one from a community of 1,000-5,000, and one from a community of 500,000 or more. One male came from a community of under 1,000, one from a community of 1,000-5000, four from a community of 5,000-10,000, five from a community of 10,000-50,000, one from a community of 100,000-500,000, and one from a community of 500,000 or more.

While the proportional difference in the administration of corporal punishment by male and female principals did not yield significance, it is an important finding.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

The following suggestions for further study are offered:

1. A longitudinal study on corporal punishment is strongly recommended. This would help to identify trends in its use or disuse throughout Arizona. The population should be selected so that males and females and Anglo and non-Anglo are equally represented. This would allow the researcher to draw conclusions that would more likely parallel the attitudes of the groups represented. The Likert statements should be revised and amended as appropriate to changing circumstances and issues. The demographic portion of the survey instrument could also be expanded to provide more base information and more variables to be tested against the expanded Likert statements.

2. Studies could be done to compare a greater range of principals' attitudes. It would be interesting to find out how many principals had to administer multiple paddlings and how they felt about it. Another purpose would be to find out how many times on average the child was spoken to before the principal decided to paddle. For instance, this study revealed a greater percentage of boys who received a paddling and was it because they failed to heed a principal's warning as the girls might have done? It would also be revealing to find out why the principals use corporal punishment. A review of the results might provide

insightful information as to that part of their attitude that condones this type of discipline. This could be discussed vis-a-vis the attitudes of principals who do not elect to use corporal punishment. Furthermore, it could be asked of principals to respond to whether they once used corporal punishment, but no longer do as a result of district policy or personal beliefs.

3. Studies that involve an opportunity for the teachers at a school to provide input would be beneficial. When studying this issue, clarifying who determines or initiates the process that results in corporal punishment would be invaluable. If it takes education to change attitudes, then this type of a study would allow one to target their population to effect change.

4. Researching the infractions that result in a child receiving corporal punishment would enable the researcher to see if there is any consistency to the process. As long as boys continue to receive an extremely disproportionate amount of the paddlings, further study is required. Do boys receive more paddlings because as the adage says, "Boys will be boys?" Along similar lines, do boys or girls receive more multiple paddlings and why?

5. A grade level study of corporal punishment would help identify where the greatest number of paddlings is administered. National studies report that the majority of

paddlings occur in the elementary school. Does Arizona reflect similar statistics?

6. And finally, in the current social climate that includes an awareness of the increase of child abuse, continued study of this form of discipline is imperative. Any school that encourages adults to use corporal punishment on children in their care cannot hope to prevent or eliminate child abuse. The sanctioned use of corporal punishment continually reinforces the notion that it is acceptable for adults to hit children. It is paradoxical, if not outrageous, to admonish parents and adults who corporally punish children while encouraging educators to do the same. Many school districts in Arizona are beginning to review their corporal punishment policies and electing to remove them. Surprisingly, a number of these reviews are being initiated by parents in the communities. As long as this form of discipline is acceptable, continued review of its application is important to the children.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Principals Administering Corporal Punishment

Gender	Ethnicity	Years of Experience	Non-Minority Male	Minority Male	Non-Minority Female	Minority Female	Total
<u>Female</u>	Anglo	3	2	-	-	-	2
	Anglo	5	-	7	-	4	11
	Anglo	5	24	9	0	1	34
	Non-Anglo	7	2	20	-	-	22
	Total	20	28	36	0	5	69
	Mean =	5.0					17.25
<u>Male</u>	Anglo	1	12	1	-	-	13
	Missing	1	16	-	1	-	17
	Anglo	2	4	5	-	-	9
	Anglo	5	2	4	0	3	9
	Anglo	6	2	1	-	-	3
	Missing	7	2	1	-	-	3
	Anglo	8	4	-	-	-	4
	Anglo	12	2	1	-	-	3
	Anglo	14	4	-	-	-	4
	Anglo	17	4	7	-	-	11
	Anglo	23	4	14	-	1	19
	Missing	32	2	11	-	-	13
	Anglo	Missing	5	-	-	-	5
	Total	128	63	45	1	4	113
	Mean =	9.84					8.7
	(Valid)	10.66					

LIKERT COMPARISONS

ALL ANSWERS ARE THE PERCENT
IN AGREEMENT WITH THE STATEMENT

APPENDIX B

	BOYS DESERVE MORE CORPORAL PUNISHMENT THAN GIRLS	BOYS RECEIVE MORE CORPORAL PUNISHMENT THAN GIRLS	MINORITIES DESERVE MORE CORPORAL PUNISHMENT THAN NON-MINORITIES	MINORITIES RECEIVE MORE CORPORAL PUNISHMENT THAN NON-MINORITIES	CORPORAL PUNISHMENT SHOULD BE ALLOWED IN ARIZONA
MALE	16	92	6	40	75/75
FEMALE	0	86	0	75	29/25 *
ANGLO PRINCIPAL	13	97	3	83	57
NON ANGLO PRINCIPAL	0	83	0	63	37
CORPORAL PUNISHMENT ALLOWED IN DISTRICT	11	100	0	56	71
CORPORAL PUNISHMENT NOT ALLOWED IN DISTRICT	5	73	5	80	17
CORPORAL PUNISHMENT ADMINISTERED AT SCHOOL	12	100	0	44/77*	87
CORPORAL PUNISHMENT NOT ADMINISTERED AT SCHOOL	6	81	6	63/49	25
CORPORAL PUNISHMENT ADMINISTERED 1988-1989	20	95	5	64/50	90
CORPORAL PUNISHMENT NOT ADMINISTERED 1988-1989	2	86	2	76/76*	30
COMMUNITY OF 50,000 OR LESS	18	82	7	50	80
COMMUNITY OF 50,000 OR MORE	7	97	2	77	50
1-2 YEARS EXPERIENCE	0	100	0	60	37
3-10 YEARS EXPERIENCE	7	88	3	68	51
10 PLUS YEARS EXPERIENCE	18	93	5	54	56

21 COLLAPSED CHI-SQUARE AND
SIGNIFICANT AT .05

APPENDIX C

COMPARISON OF MALE AND FEMALE PRINCIPALS

	MALE	FEMALE	
I. RESPONDENTS	31	31	
THOSE WHO PADDLED	13 42% OF MALES 76.5% OF ALL PRINCIPALS WHO PADDLED	4 13% OF FEMALES 23.5% OF ALL PRINCIPALS WHO PADDLED	
NUMBER OF PADDLINGS ADMINISTERED	113 (62%)	69 (38%)	
AVERAGE NUMBER OF PADDLINGS	8.7	17.25	
PADDLINGS ADMINISTERED TO BOYS	96%	93%	
PADDLINGS ADMINISTERED TO MINORITIES	43%	59%	
	<u>3</u> AGREE	<u>3</u> AGREE	MEAN RANK
II. BOYS DESERVE MORE CORPORAL PUNISHMENT THAN GIRLS	16	0	*
BOYS RECEIVE MORE CORPORAL PUNISHMENT THAN GIRLS	92	86	
MINORITY STUDENTS DESERVE MORE CORPORAL PUNISHMENT THAN NON-MINORITY STUDENTS	6	0	*
MINORITY STUDENTS RECEIVE MORE CORPORAL PUNISHMENT THAN NON-MINORITY STUDENTS	40	75	
CORPORAL PUNISHMENT SHOULD BE PERMITTED IN ARIZONA	75	25 *	*
III. SUMMATED ATTITUDE SCALE SCORES:	_____	FEMALES DISAGREED MORE THAN MALES	

* SIGNIFICANT AT .05

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